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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

# INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY French Cameroons

SUBJECT Douala, Port Information

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1.   Approaches & Entrance: Douala ($4^\circ 0'$ N; $9^\circ 40'$ E) is approximately 27 miles from the sea and approximately 14 miles from the Base Buoy near the mouth of the river. Entrance and channel information appearing on H O charts and publications currently in use appears to be accurate except for a fairly constant change in the positions of buoys as the banks and shoals shift. From the Sea Buoy to the Base Buoy the channel is wide (approximately 600 feet) and may be easily followed from buoy to buoy. Above the Base Buoy the channel is well marked and about 200 feet wide. Maximum draft is 23 feet at high water springs and 21 feet at high water neaps. There is a considerable current on the flood and ebb tides.

2.   Pilotage: Pilotage is compulsory. Vessels pick up pilots at the Base Buoy.

3.   Harbor & Accommodations: The harbor is constructed on the east bank of the river and vessels dock port or starboard side to, depending on the tide at the time. Three ocean-going steamers can berth at Douala with space left for a smaller ship or coastal vessel. The main wharf is being extended at present to provide berths for an additional seven ocean-going vessels, but progress on this project is very slow. Depth alongside the section of the wharf used by ocean-going vessels is approximately 26 feet. There is sufficient water alongside the wharf so that any ship that can navigate the channel can easily float at all stages of the tide while alongside. For vessels that have too much draft to go all the way to Douala there is a deep water anchorage just above the Base Buoy. There is another dock at Bonaberi with 26 feet of water alongside. This is across the river from Douala and is the terminus for the railway inland. It is used almost exclusively for loading bananas.

4.   Cargo Handling Gear: Almost all cargo is handled by ships' gear. There are several cranes along the newer section of the wharf but these are used almost exclusively to handle logs and cargo to and from lighters. There capacity is approximately three tons. Cargo handling vehicles are not available in adequate numbers at Douala, especially fork lifts, high-lows, and crane trucks.

5.   Tugs & Lighters: There are numerous lighters of 50 to 100 tons and launches for towing. There is one tug available.

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6.   Labor: Labor is all native with French supervision. Natives are taught to handle cranes and other machinery.

7.   Storage: In the harbor area there are five warehouses for storage of cargo and several new warehouses are under construction. There are also large open areas suitable for goods that do not have to be under cover.

8.   Congestion: Douala is usually congested and dischargers wait an average of two days. Vessels are advised to anticipate a delay of from two to five days under present conditions.

9.   Rail Facilities: Railroad facilities are very limited in this colony and most equipment is badly in need of repair. It is not uncommon for the switching engine at Douala to be derailed several times during the course of a day.

10.  Miscellaneous: Water and stores are available. However, there are no bunkering facilities. Electricity is available in the Douala area but service is not reliable.

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